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NEWS AND NOTES

ENGLISH AT THE BAY SECTION OF THE CALIFORNIA STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Everybody, even writers for Mr. Bok's popular journal, claims to be a judge of English literature, and everybody more or less, not excluding Mr. Bok's contributors, seems to think that English teaching is in a rather bad way. Therefore, perhaps, seats in the English hall of the California Teachers Association, Bay Section, Miss Minerva U. Howell of Stockton High School presiding, were soon filled; while wayfarers from adjourned sections of History, Mathematics, and Industrial Arts dropped in from time to time to hear what English experts had to say for themselves.

It developed that there was a-plenty to say, and no lack of speakers. Indeed, the teacher of English is generally able to echo Mrs. Poyser: "When I have anything to say I can always find words to say it in, thank God." East and West, there has been a growing dissatisfaction, particularly in recent years, with the results of English instruction in the secondary schools. Many teachers are disposed to blame the prescribed course of study, dominated everywhere by university admission requirements. These critics agree with Mr. George Meredith, who says in one of the letters just published: "The atmosphere of universities is rather overcharged with the spirit of the calm Past, and must be resisted." Others think that the fault lies in the teacher's method or her want of literary appreciation. To experienced teachers of English this is all an old, though ever-interesting, story.

In the past two years the English department of the California Teachers Association, Bay Section, has discussed the course in English literature in the secondary schools of California. This year the program was made with a view to bringing to at least some temporary conclusion the old quarrel, the officers who made the program assuming that, after two years of discussion, the sentiment of the teachers might well be expressed in the familiar language of the prescribed course: "For God's sake, let us pass on!"

Consequently, the program-makers divided the field of oral discussion pretty evenly between the university professors on one side and the high-school teachers on the other, and in addition planned a report

embodying the consensus of opinion of English teachers throughout the state upon the course of study in English literature. The chief aim of this article is to set forth the report.

This is the day of the questionnaire. It is a very obscure teacher that escapes the modern inquisition: "How do you employ the laboratory method in teaching *Comus*?" "Will you give in detail your methods in oral English?" and so forth. Not to be behind, and yet not to tax the teacher's veracity with questions upon her actual procedure, the program-makers proposed some questions on the course of study to more than a hundred English teachers in the colleges and high schools of California. Miss Ethel Farnham, of Nevada City, agreed to receive the answers and to report upon them at the 1912-13 meeting. Her report was full of interest, thorough, and significant. The following is an attempted summary of Miss Farnham's complete report, but in no way approaches the excellence of that paper.

Only 39 answers to the questionnaire were received, but these were from all classes of secondary schools, and many of them represented the consensus of opinion of several English teachers in the same school.

To the first question, "What is the chief aim in the teaching of English literature in the secondary schools?" 32 answers were: "To foster a love and appreciation of good literature." As a secondary aim 10 added "training in expression," and 6, "development of ideals of life and character."

The next two questions were: "If we fail in this aim why do we fail?" and "What can we do to reach the desired end?" The answers range from the aesthete's, "There is failure where the teacher does not love literature," to the pragmatist's "Put the boiler-makers to making boilers." The majority, however, emphasize the necessity of increasing the student's enjoyment and interest in the subject and lessening the amount of technical and critical work.

Miss Farnham tabulates the following:

	Yes	No
Are you satisfied with the course as prescribed by the university? . .	7	13
Is the present course suited to all schools and communities?	2	18
Should a special course be provided for academic students not expecting to go to college?	18	19
For commercial students?	23	14

The next question, "If there is a specific need in the teaching of literature in each high-school year, what is that need?" was variously answered; but the general drift was as follows: for the first and second

years, "To arouse interest, to train in form and expression, with material preferably narrative and heroic"; for the third year, "To develop the critical sense in discriminate study of the great literary forms—epic, drama, novel, etc."; for the fourth year, "To fix well ideals of life, to develop highly civic interest, logical faculty, power of expression, and to give a survey of English literature."

The questionnaire closed with the list of English classics prescribed by the university, as follows, and a request that the teachers addressed should strike out such classics as ought to be eliminated, and suggest substitutions.

Classics, with the number voting to eliminate:

First Year		Third Year	
Ballads	4	L'Allegro and Il Penseroso	10
Lady of the Lake	8	Comus	16
Classic Myths (except as reference)	15	Idylls of the King	0
Ivanhoe	6	Vision of Sir Launfal	0
		Commemoration Ode	16
		Warren Hastings	16
		Vicar of Wakefield	14
		Silas Marner	7
		Sir Roger de Coverley	17
Second Year		Fourth Year	
The Deserted Village	11	Burke	10
The Cotter's Saturday Night	10	Macaulay	11
Tam O'Shanter	8	Webster	5
The Prisoner of Chillon	6	Carlyle's Essay on Burns	16
Horatius	1	Chaucer's Prologue	6
Snowbound	10	Macbeth	4
The Merchant of Venice	1	Lycidas	8
Julius Caesar	2	Sonnets	2
Emerson's Essays	20	Nineteenth-century poems	0
Lowell's Essays	17		

If the black-ball method should be applied here, only three of these classics would remain in the course of study—Tennyson's "Idylls of the King," Lowell's "Vision of Sir Launfal," and the group of nineteenth-century poems. Moreover, several teachers suggest for the last-mentioned, "any nineteenth-century poems," a suggestion which calls up visions of future scholars brought up on the lays of the Sweet Singer of Michigan, such lyrics as the Indiana poet's—

O sassafras, O sassafras,
It is the stuff for me!

or a native Missouri ballad, with the tender refrain,

And they laid Jesse James in his grave!

The least popular of the classics, in the order of their disfavor, are Emerson's *Essays*, Addison's *De Coverley Papers*, Lowell's *Essays*, Lowell's "Commemoration Ode," Milton's *Comus*, Macaulay's *Warren Hastings*, and Carlyle's *Essay on Burns*. Next in disfavor are the *Vicar of Wakefield*, classics myths, Macaulay's *Oration*, and *The Deserted Village*.

Reasons given for eliminations were not always quite obvious. *Macbeth*, for example, was characterized as an "unpleasant play." It is an open question whether the critic was serious and euphemistic, or subtly humorous. It is not to be believed that she had in mind Mr. Bernard Shaw's basis of classification.

The substitutions run sometimes very close to the beaten track: for Carlyle, *Sesame and Lilies*, *Compensation*, *Self-Reliance*, Macaulay's *Jonson*. Again, one vigorous image-breaker would demolish Chaucer's *Prologue*, and set up Shaw, Ibsen, or Maeterlinck's *Life of the Bee*. For *Lycidas*, one would insert Kipling, another Spenser.

But as the list of substitutions is too long for this article I will quote from Miss Farnham's summary:

The chief objection to most of the eliminated classics is that they are too remote from the present age in spirit, and too difficult for the average student; for both reasons they lack interest and work against our chief aim, the development of a love of literature. For some of the eliminations, the substitutes allowed by the university are satisfactory, although they should be on the main list, and the present stock antiquities on the substitute list. But in addition there is a demand for more modern and vital literature, especially Stevenson, Kipling, Dickens, and American speakers or writers not earlier than the Civil War. Further, there is a strong demand for at least a half-year course in American literature and its history; the feeling is very clear that we have neglected our own writers, and unduly exalted the dry bones of the English classics.

However, one notes that of the eight selections from American authors included in the prescribed list, only one has general favor, while two, the Emerson essays, stand at the head of the *index prohibitorius*, and the remaining five are within the most unpopular group.

In closing, Miss Farnham read the following letter from Professor Charles Mills Gayley, which indicates the broad, open-minded policy that Professor Gayley, as head of the department of English of the university, has always maintained toward the high-school teachers of California.

DEAR MISS FARNHAM:

Please inform those engaging in this discussion at the institute that the English Department always welcomes counsel from those actually teaching in the California schools; and that it has uniformly aimed to meet the demands of those of longest experience and ripest judgment.

The English Department, while seeing the necessity of a standard course as a basis for entrance examinations and reasonable uniformity of school work, was, I believe, the first department in the United States to adopt the principle of equivalent substitutions by *accredited* schools. No teacher in an accredited school need feel hampered by a cast-iron list of requirements in English. The announcement contains a long list of suggested substitutions; and the department is ready to make those substitutions as elastic as possible within reason. In fact we are continually sanctioning substitutions by good teachers, provided only that the substitution is something in the way of tried and worthy literature, wisely planned and conducted composition, thoughtful exercises in speaking and debating—in other words, anything that is not a mere fad, capricious, rapid, cheap; but contributing to discipline, inspiration, imagination, and more, to the acquisition of information, the development of the historic sense, the cultivation of a taste for the best in thought, language, literature.

We are glad to be assisted by your wisdom, and anxious to be informed of your consensus of opinion. The English Department of the University of California has no sympathy with the hard-and-fast prescriptions of the New England requirements. We are, in California schools, far ahead of the rest of the country in English work; and largely because our ears are open to the advice of our best California teachers.

Yours very truly,

C. M. GAYLEY

As the other speakers on the program did not use notes, the writer offers with diffidence her general impressions of their talks, which were full of practical suggestions and a spirit of courageous optimism.

"What We Do and How We Do It" was discussed by Miss Emma Breck, of the Oakland High School, and Mrs. Florence Y. Humphreys, of the Palo Alto High School. Miss Breck emphasized the importance of the English classics, with free substitution for the prescribed texts, holding the recitation period sacred to intensive work, but providing a wide and varied course of home reading. In her work American literature occupies the last half of the third year, and public speaking may be elected in that year or taken in addition to fourth-year work. Dramatics has not yet established itself permanently as a course for credit in the Oakland High School.

Mrs. Humphreys outlined a course which she had developed in an eastern school. She disregards college-entrance requirements, and

"aims for life." Her method is remarkable for the vast amount of reading covered, chiefly in the classroom, and mainly by the teacher, who, of course, must read well. Interest is the chief consideration in her choice of classics for reading.

"Differentiation of the Course to Meet the Needs of Commercial Students" was discussed by Miss Ethel Coldwell, of the Oakland Manual Training and Commercial High School. Again interest was emphasized, together with the "socialization" of the work. The speaker does not follow the university requirements. She gives much attention to composition, chiefly in exposition, and drills much in technique, the mechanics of composition.

Professor W. S. Thomas, of the University of California, spoke briefly concerning "The University of California and the Secondary Schools." He said that so far as arranging the course to meet various needs is concerned, the English teacher should consider last the boy or girl who goes to college. The main consideration should be the student who goes no farther than the high school. As to the value of the prescribed classics, the speaker expressed the opinion that the choice of matter signifies little if the work is in the hands of wise teachers. Professor Thomas considers the outlook in California very promising.

Dr. Richard Gause Boone, of the University of California, closed the program with an address full of the wisdom of the man of experience and observation, and of the trained specialist in his own field. His subject was "Adolescent Tendencies in Their Relation to the Teaching of English." Dr. Boone emphasized the importance of oral English. Too much time is spent in teaching written composition and in correcting written work. In the earlier high-school years we should stress narration and argument. The speaker had the marked sympathy of the audience in the statement that there should be little or no differentiation of the course in literature for the different kinds of schools, academic and industrial.

At the business meeting which followed the program, Miss Ruth Kimball of the San Jose High School was elected president, and Miss Ethel Swain, also of San Jose, secretary-treasurer.

CATHERINE L. FIELDS, *Secretary*

LODI, CALIFORNIA

AN ECHO FROM PARIS

The following clipping from the magazine *L'Education* for December, 1912, will remind readers of the *Journal* of Professor Young's interesting account of his observations in French lycées.

KARL YOUNG. "La composition française dans les lycées" (*English Journal*, Chicago, juin 1912).

M. Karl Young a lu avec attention les instructions ministérielles de 1909 sur l'enseignement du français; il en reproduit dans son article les passages les plus importants. Puis il a visité plusieurs lycées de Paris, tels que Louis-le-Grand et Henri IV; il a assisté à des classes, a vu des copies corrigées. Ses impressions sont très favorables; alors que nous avons encore présents à l'esprit les trop nombreux articles qui ont affirmé naguère que nos élèves ne savent plus le français (leurs arrière-grands-pères le savaient si bien!), c'est pour nous un vrai plaisir que de rencontrer en cette revue américaine, organe des professeurs d'anglais aux Etats-Unis, un éloge de nos professeurs dont l'enseignement est si gai, si alerte et si suggestif, et des principes pédagogiques que les instructions officielles exposent avec tant de clarté.

Ce que M. Karl Young a remarqué le plus, c'est que l'élève français est *fier* de pouvoir écrire d'une manière correcte, nette, élégante; que ce goût pour le style est guidé par un sens critique constamment développé et affiné par l'analyse intelligente des œuvres classiques. La correction orale des devoirs est faite avec entrain, et repose sur la lecture des copies par le professeur et ses corrections écrites. Nos élèves de Première ne font pas de fautes de grammaire. Elèves et professeurs accordent une grande importance non seulement à la propriété des termes et à l'équilibre des phrases, mais aussi et surtout, à la disposition de l'ensemble d'une composition suivant un plan logique. Les élèves ont, pendant la correction orale, une liberté d'attitude et de parole qui leur permet de rester éveillés et alertes.

Le professeur américain reconnaît qu'il n'a appris, au cours de ses visites, aucun procédé nouveau; la supériorité des résultats obtenus dans les lycées français pour l'enseignement de la composition française n'a pas pour cause une organisation particulière ni un système spécial; cette supériorité provient de ce que tout l'enseignement est inspiré par un motif réel, par le besoin de satisfaire un amour-propre et comme un orgueil national, de suivre avec plaisir la tradition nationale qui veut que tout écrivain français, même s'il est encore sur les bancs du lycée, écrive une langue nette et ordonne ses idées selon la raison.

Nous acceptons bien volontiers les éloges de M. Karl Young; ce serait être trop modeste que de déclarer qu'ils sont immérités. Mais, entre nous, ne nous dissimulons pas que l'enquête de M. Young a été trop restreinte, et que l'enseignement de la composition française ne s'élève pas dans tous les lycées au niveau qu'il atteint dans les lycées de Paris.

A NEW PUBLIC SPEAKING CONFERENCE

A number of teachers of public speaking in the colleges met at Evanston, Ill., December 17 and organized the Public Speaking Conference of the States of the Middle West. The officers elected were: President, Thomas C. Trueblood, University of Michigan; Secretary, Minnie Jenks, Parsons College, Fairfield, Iowa. The Committee on Permanent Organization consists of Clayton D. Crawford, of Beloit College, Clarion D. Hardy, of Northwestern Academy, Minnie Jenks, of Parsons College, and H. B. Gislason, of the University of Minnesota. Among the topics discussed was that of the relation of the Conference to the National Council of Teachers of English but no definite action on this point was taken.

CO-OPERATION IN PRACTICE

So much interest has been aroused by reference in recent numbers of the *Journal* to the plan of co-operation in use at the Cicero Township High School near Chicago that it has seemed wise to publish a brief account of it. This will be found in another part of the present issue. Principal Church has no fear of breaking with traditions if there appears to be a better way. He is a pioneer in cutting down the number of classes to the teacher and the number of pupils to the class to such numbers as to make efficiency possible. It is to be hoped that he may have many followers.

THE FIRST MILESTONE

With Vol. I, No. 3, the *Journal of English Studies*, published by Horace Marshall & Son, Temple House, London, passes its first milestone. This number contains an article on "Teaching English in Public Schools" by Arthur C. Benson; "The Use of Phonetics in the Teaching of English" by Walter Rippmann, and other suggestive contributions. The editor reviews with approval the last report of the National Conference on Uniform Requirements, and there appears an interesting report of a meeting of the National Home-Reading Union. No doubt there will be need soon of increasing the number of issues of the magazine.

COMPOSITION THROUGH CORRESPONDENCE

The pupils of the Lake View High School in Chicago, under the guidance of Miss Lydia Trowbridge, are corresponding with pupils in other schools, both in the United States and elsewhere. The results can hardly be other than valuable. Composition with a specific motive is bound to be vastly superior to mere exercises.